

Message Text

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S E C R E T CAIRO 7189

NODIS/CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR EG IS

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN COUNTERPROPOSALS

REF: CAIRO 7171

1. SINCE SENDING REFTEL EARLY THIS MORNING, I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO PIECE TOGETHER A NUMBER OF RANDOM COMMENTS MADE TO ME BY VARIOUS PEOPLE IN THE LAST 36 HOURS ABOUT THE EGYPTIAN NEGOTIATING POSITION. WHILE SADAT'S COUNTER-PROPOSAL AND SECOND, FALLBACK PROPOSAL BOTH HAVE MANY ELEMENTS WHICH THE ISRAELIS WILL FIND IT HARD TO ACCEPT, THEY SHOW GREATER FLEXIBILITY THEN THE EGYPTIANS HAVE PREVIOUSLY DEMONSTRATED. SADAT OBVIOUSLY WANTS AN AGREEMENT IF HE CAN GET ONE ON ANY KIND OF REASONABLY HONORABLE TERMS. HE LOOKS TO US TO PROTECT HIS INTEREST IN THIS REGARD.

2. I HAVE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT, DESPITE HIS FREQUENT IMPETUOUSNESS, FAHMY HAS PLAYED A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN EGYPTIAN STRATEGY COUNCILS THESE PAST 36 HOURS. HIS CHEF DE CABINET, USAMA AL-BAZ, WHOM I SAW ON ANOTHER MATTER THIS MORNING, OBSERVED IN PASSING THAT A GREAT HURDLE HAD BEEN LEAPED YESTERDAY IN THE DECISION TO PRESENT NOT JUST ONE BUT TWO COUNTER-PROPOSALS. FAHMY HAD RECALLED MY ADVICE TO CAST

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ANY COUNTERPROPOSAL IN THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF THE

ISRAELI PROPOSAL AND HAD ARGUED FOR A PRAGMATIC APPROACH. UNNAMED "OTHERS", BUT AMONG THEM OBVIOUSLY GAMASY, HAD INSISTED ON THE MILITARY ASPECTS. SADAT HAD BEEN TORN BETWEEN THE TWO. HIS WAY OUT HAD BEEN TO PRESENT THE COUNTERPROPOSAL, WHICH HAD BEEN WORKED OUT JOINTLY BETWEEN GAMASY AND FAHMY, AND A SECOND MORE MODEST FOLLOW-UP PROPOSAL. TO MAKE THE LATTER ACCEPTABLE TO GAMASY AND THE MILITARY, SADAT HAD INCLUDED THEREIN THE IDEA OF THE MAIN EGYPTIAN FORCE CROSSING INTO SINAI AND THE WARNING STATIONS. AL-BAZ RECOGNIZED THERE WERE ELEMENTS IN EACH OF THE TWO WHICH WERE UNACCEPTABLE AND OPINED THERE WOULD STILL BE MUCH HARD BARGAINING. HE HOPED, HOWEVER, THAT THE LATEST EGYPTIAN COUNTERPROPOSALS NARROW THE GAP.

3. GAMASY, WHEN HE AND I TALKED BRIEFLY BEFORE LAST NIGHT'S MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT, EXPRESSED HIS USUAL, IMPATIENT CONCERN THAT ANY AGREEMENT, TO BE ACCEPTABLE, REQUIRED A GREATER MILITARY BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES. A MAJOR ELEMENT OF HIS EXPLANATION OF THE COUNTERPROPOSAL WAS THAT IT WOULD ALLOW THIS, YET STILL NOT REPRODUCE JEOPARDIZE ISRAEL'S SECURITY. MOBAREK, WHO TOOK PART IN THE DISCUSSION TO A GREATER EXTENT THAN I HAD PREVIOUSLY EXPERIENCED, TOOK THE SAME GENERAL LINE. PRIMIN SALEM WAS QUIET THROUGHOUT.

4. ALTHOUGH FAHMY TOO MADE A STRONG PITCH FOR THE EGYPTIAN COUNTERPROPOSAL, HE SHOWS SOME FLEXIBILITY. WHILE I CANNOT CONFIRM THIS, I SUSPECT THE EGYPTIANS ALREADY HAVE AGREED UPON YET ANOTHER FALLBACK PROPOSAL IF NEEDED. I SAY THIS BECAUSE AT THE END OF OUR TALK LAST NIGHT, AFTER REPORT AFTER THE TWO COUNTERPROPOSALS HAD BEEN GIVEN TO ME, FAHMY RATHER EXPECTANTLY ASKED THE PRESIDENT IN ARABIC WHETHER HE WAS GOING TO TELL ME ABOUT A THIRD PROPOSITION. SADAT RESPONDED THAT HE THOUGHT TWO WERE ENOUGH AT THIS TIME, AND FAHMY QUICKLY TOOK THE HINT AND DROPPED THE SUBJECT. WHEN TALKING WITH FAHMY THIS MORNING ON ANOTHER MATTER, HE ASKED FOR MY VIEWS ON THE COUNTERPROPOSALS. I TOLD HIM I HAD IMMEDIATELY REPORTED THEM, BUT THAT SPEAKING PERSONALLY I FORESAW SOME PROBLEMS WITH SOME OF THE
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ELEMENTS OF THESE COUNTERPROPOSALS. AS EXAMPLES, I MENTIONED THE ALTERNATE ROAD LOCATIONS AND THE WARNING STATIONS. FAHMY RESPONDED THAT, IF THE ISRAELIS ARE SERIOUS ABOUT WANTING A NEW INTERIM AGREEMENT AND ASSURING PEACE IN THE AREA, THEY SHOULD BE RESPONSIVE TO THESE THOUGHTS. HE CONCEDED, HOWEVER, THAT HE DID NOT EXPECT THE ISRAELIS TO ACCEPT EITHER THE ALTERNATE ROADS OR THE WARNING STATIONS. HE HOPES,

NEVERTHELESS, THAT AN ISRAELI COUNTERPROPOSAL BASED UPON THE LATEST EGYPTIAN IDEAS WILL NOW BE FORTHCOMING. HOPEFULLY, THE GAP CAN BE BRIDGED THROUGH PATIENT EFFORTS AND SUCH ASSISTANCE AS WE CAN GIVE. HE DOUBTS THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO DO MUCH AT PRESENT TIME. WHEN MOBAREK URGED TWO EVENINGS AGO MORE US PRESSURE ON ISRAEL, FAHMY RESPONDED DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS INVOLVING "JEWISH LOBBY" MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR US ADMINISTRATION TO DO MUCH MORE NOW. HE SAID THIS MORE IN SORROW THAN IN ANGER.

5. SADAT AND FAHMY BOTH SEEMED TO THINK A NEW SHUTTLE EFFORT OUGHT TO BE POSSIBLE BY MID-AUGUST IF THE ISRAELIS MEET GOE HALFWAY.
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